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ABSTRACT

The humanist position for the teaching of values can be turned against English teachers and literature education when it is based primarily on the assumption that literature directly portrays life, a strategy which was used by a religious fundamentalist group, Renaissance Peterborough, in its dispute with officials of Peterborough County, Ontario, during a censorship controversy. The fundamentalists argued at a more sophisticated level than that of interpretative literalism, stressing the sociological implications of reading in context, as well as the aesthetic and literary. The teachers maintained, on the one hand, that critical detachment from the text ensures that students will not be co-opted by its moral "dicta," and on the other, that the educational value of literature lies in its capacity to alter their lives for the better. The literary text by virtue of its literariness is open to manifold interpretations. Currently, literature itself, both as an art and as a discipline, is under siege, not only from censors but also from sociology, poststructuralist criticism, linguistics, information theory, and back-to-basics heresies about the redundancy of the literary in conceptions of literacy. Educators are thus forced to re-examine the relationship between word and idea, image and action, and literature and life. (NKA)

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LITERATURE, VALUES, AND TRUTH: WHY WE COULD LOSE THE CENSORSHIP DEBATE

by

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The best work done on the school censorship problem has been of a practical nature: advice to the warring factions, legal considerations, political procedures, and empirical evidence about the "causal relation" between words and human actions (Crawford 64). In the case of censoring literary texts, though, I believe there is a need for more theoretical inquiry into what I call the "epistemo-literary" relationship between the reading and study of literature, on the one hand, and personal and social values, on the other. Today the central role of the reader is enjoying wide interest in a number of areas directly bearing on education. Reader response critics validate reading as process; ethnographers chart individual reactions; cognitive psychologists measure behavioral effects; response-to-literature researchers devise instructional techniques; feminists challenge sexist language and masculinist dominance in the literature curriculum. Nevertheless, increasingly worrisome school censorship crises in North America indicate the failure of related forms of knowledge to address meaningfully conflicting, deeply held beliefs about the educational function of the language we call literary. A crucial though hidden agenda of the school censorship debate is opposing views of literary meaning or poetic truth, and how it invokes the relationship between literature and life. It is this aspect of censorship in the schools that will provide the focus for my analysis.

In trying to clarify the literary and the moral I am reminded of Jacques Maritain's warning that anyone delving into art and ethics at the same time risks displeasing everyone (15-16). Undaunted, however, I rush in. Drawing on the experience of one school district in Ontario, I hope to demonstrate how the humanist position for the teaching of values through literature can be turned against English teachers and literature education when it is based upon a theory of language operating primarily on the assumption that literature directly portrays life. I will conclude with a different defense for the value dimension of literature, a model grounded in a

theory of literary language as a hypothesis about life, rather than as a facsimile of it.

The Peterborough County Experience

For my discussion of the Peterborough County censorship controversy I will concentrate on the defense of Margaret Laurence's novel, The Diviners, offered by the Head of English at Lakefield District High School, and the rejoinder to that defense put forward by a religious fundamentalist group, Renaissance Peterborough. These two documents figure forth a distinctively Anglo-Canadian perspective on the place of values in literature. The defence reflects the traditional belief, peculiarly British, in the normative value of literature embodied in the idea of a liberal education; and the fundamentalist counterargument mirrors what Northrop Frye has coined a typically Canadian "garrison mentality," the defensive psychological predisposition of a people who live in a harsh physical environment (1971, 236). It is this tension between faith and doubt that has perpetuated the Peterborough winters of discontent[1] over the recurrent "book dilemma." The Peterborough debate, painful and protracted, has raged at some times hotly and openly, and at others covertly, from 1976 to 1985. Its most visible target has been the works of Canadian novelist Margaret Laurence, who has charted the powerfully mythic journeys of female protagonists towards consciousness. (Ironically Laurence resides in the very school district which condemns her as a subversive and pornographer.) In defending her novels, Laurence evinces a profound religious sensibility coupled with a personal conviction about the prophetic role of the poet. As she confessed in a recent interview, "The fundamentalists could say I was possessed by an evil spirit, . . .I can't argue with that. I have a mystic sense of being given something to write. I may not be an orthodox Christian, but I believe in the Holy Spirit (Czarnecki 186).

Anyone who becomes immersed in the myriad briefs, depositions, and letters of support and denunciation that poured in as a result of both the

1976 and 1985 censorship confrontations must come away acutely aware of the deep chord Laurence's works have struck in her readers. Whether it is a sense of outrage, fear, or affirmation, the feelings evoked by Laurence's poetic language in The Diviners are almost primeval. Reading the primary sources makes it easier to empathize with all sides, with the mother who poignantly tells of her daughter's devastation in having been forced to read aloud in class four-letter words never before uttered by her; with the teacher who insists that students engaged with the work are positively reinforced through "an exploration of self-awareness, self-acceptance, tolerance of others, understanding of human frailty, family responsibilities and honest relationships, love and compassion" (Unpublished Brief to Textbook Review Committee, 1985); and with the citizen whose resistance to knowing was so entrenched that he insisted, "You don't have to drink the whole glass after you've found the milk is sour" (Peterborough Examiner, April 26, 1985).

Even though The Diviners was reinstated in the curriculum in 1976 and again in 1985, along with three other indicted novels, J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye, The Stone Angel, and Jest of God (the latter two both authored by Margaret Laurence), the reasons for their retention ultimately have less to do with the persuasiveness of the apologias penned by Peterborough Heads of English Departments, or their success in making genuine conversions among the members of the Textbook Review Committee, than with political manipulation. In short, the jury (at least in the 1985 instance) was stacked in favor of the novels' supporters. What seems to have been ignored in the latest round of fire, though, is that the 1976 trenchant fundamentalist argument against the defense of The Diviners was left largely unanswered. A residual disquiet permeates the present practice of Peterborough English teachers, who continue to do what they do best, teaching what they believe is great literature in the abiding faith that reading and studying it is a moral endeavor. Looking hard at some of Renaissance Peterborough's objections to the defense of The Diviners may be one way of ensuring that their faith is not blind.

In an article titled "Liberalism and Censorship" published in the Journal of Canadian Studies Ralph Heintzman writes:

> The bulk of recent commentary on censorship has been a crude mixture of knee-jerk reactions, unexamined premises, and the wielding of bogeys. This is as true of those who oppose it as of those who favour it, but it is more surprising and regrettable in the case of the former. The censorship debate has not been characterized by the careful thought and distinctions one would hope to find on such a sensitive and divisive issue, especially from the "intellectuals" whose special care it ought to be to make just such distinctions. (1-2)

Perhaps Heintzman is being unduly harsh here, if we take his term "intellectuals" to include English teachers on the front line; after all, courses in critical apologetics do not comprise part of their academic or professional training. Yet it would seem that today professional survival is contingent upon writing a convincing "defence of poetry." In what follows, my purpose will be to examine some weaknesses of the 1976 defense of The Diviners and some strengths of the Renaissance Peterborough rebuttal to it in order to grapple with the serious challenges they both pose for the current state of literature education.

Referential Meaning, Truth of Correspondence, and the Rhetorical Fallacy

Running throughout the letters of support for and the actual defenses of all four novels in question are appeals to their verisimilitude and the educational importance of vicarious experience. Statements such as, "Students can relate to this novel," or "This book helps adolescents to see life as it really is," are made as though realism, sympathetic identification, and emotional absorption are self-evident guarantors for the moral inviolateness of literature. It was these very epistemo-literary values, however, that were attacked by Renaissance Peterborough in their denunciation of classroom use of the novels. Both sides argued within the framework of a referential theory of language, which privileges the values mentioned above. I hope to show that the logical impasse resulting from the Peterborough controversy can be obviated only by invoking a different theory of language, which clarifies and modifies the educational role of personal engagement with the text.

The reference theory of language (also known as the representational, mimetic, or truth-of-correspondence theory) posits a one-on-one direct relationship between words and things, events, ideas, or values in the world to which it is deemed words point. At its most primitive, truth-of-correspondence is a belief in the transparency of words and their power to reflect or reproduce "life as it really is." This kind of narrow referential realism shows up in the reader as interpretative literalist, who equates a literary work with "the situation and things [in the world that it is believed] gave rise" to the text (Ellis 153). In other words, a literary "statement" is judged by an interpretative literalist to be profane, ungodly, or pornographic on the premise that it reveals a profane, blasphemous, or pornographic "reality" in the world. Such an inference can be made only by omitting or virtually annihilating the concept of genre and literary values such as "style," "emphasis," and "connotation," which become casualties of a truncated extrapolation of literary content from literary form (Ellis 153).

The interpretative literalist ignores what Karlheinze Stierle calls the "self-referential nature of a fictional text," in which "the reader [sees] its formal structures against the horizon of its content structures." Viewing fictional representation as indistinct from the actual representation of the world, the interpretative literalist has no access to the notion of literature as hypothetical statement or what Stierle terms the "representation of possible forms of organization for experience" (103). Under interpretative literalism the sour milk metaphor, quoted earlier, does hold water, so to speak; for the interpretative literalist is able to demand a textual meaning that is single and predictable, and to object to that meaning if it fails to conform to a preconceived value system. When an espoused value is thought to be subverted by the text, the interpretative literalist often reacts, as in the Peterborough case, by deleting offending passages and referring specific readers to pages judged "unprintable" (Unpublished Brief to Textbook Review Committee, 1985).

Interpretative literalism functions as an extreme form of truth-of-correspondence; but truth-of-correspondence itself has been very much a legacy of western linguistic theory since Plato. Indeed, it is difficult to come up with a valid acount of the spiritual dimension of literature without it. In the history of civilization, the pursuit of consciousness has seen the intellectualized mind split itself off from the whole experience of reality; thus literature and the arts have come to be regarded as the impetus to link up inner experience (including unconscious experience) with outside events. It is the proximity of the arts to unconscious needs and desires that I believe provokes censorship attacks. Literature, though, as compared with the other arts, presents a special case, simply because its building blocks, or material cause (as Aristotle would say), words, the stuff out of which it is made, is more explicitly referential; that is, literary language is more closely aligned with what we think of as the "rational disciplines," history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, which, are thought to have a more precise and therefore more "truthful" relation to reality than say, colors or musical notation. Thus the crediblity of the poet within truth-of-correspondence is directly dependent upon the degree to which poetry or literature is seen to provide what Northrop Frye calls "a rhetorical analogue to concerned truth." Here, the social function of poetry is judged on the basis of its capacity to reinforce or negate emotionally the truth statements of non-literary writing, (1973, 66 68) which, "really means what it says" as "direct comunication." This notion of literature as a second-order truth or reality can be thought of as the rhetorical analogue fallacy, which in censorship debates often takes the form of referential realism and interpretative literalism.

One attempt to transcend these twin horns of the rhetorical analogue dilemma is to exhort would-be censors to read the entire book before it is condemned. But such well-intentioned advice is usually of little help; for a plea to read the whole book is one for literary context. This in turn is really an invitation to reject truth-of-correspondence and belief in "direct communication" in favor of language as "indirect communication," as a

constellation of verbal symbols whose meaning is multiple, indeterminate and polyvalent. On this view, the text is seen less as mystically expressive of certain kinds of truths or values than as what Catherine Belsey calls a "constructed artifact."[2] Moving from the former to the latter model, however, entails a radical transformation of consciousness unlikely to be undergone by someone who is convinced that a dirty book is a dirty book is a dirty book. When this kind of change does occur, it must be prefaced by the moral predisposition to resist resistance to knowing.[3] For example, in Peterborough County the Chair of the first Textbook Review Committee confessed his need for study and basic guidance in reading differently;[4] and in the more recent debacle a community representative did stress the importance of looking "at our own inhibitions before criticizing" (Czarnecki 190). This augurs well for at least the possibility of educating the public into regarding literary works not as guides to life, but as moving, powerful hypotheses about life, which bear much reflection and sifting through, as meditations rather than as poetic depictors of moral and religious propositions.

Censors habitually frame their attacks on books within the misconceived ideology of the rhetorical fallacy. What teachers must avoid is the temptation to buy into that fallacy in framing their defenses of particular works. Understandably, teachers may succumb to the rhetorical fallacy even if they don't believe in it, simply because they despair of winning over the opposition on any other ground. A further difficulty lies in the fact that, while the literary critical background of the best qualified literature teachers militates against holding to a narrow truth-of-correspondence between literary works and moral and social values, increasingly non-specialists are teaching English, and neither group is helped much by the educational administration. Certainly, a clear grasp of the epistemology of literary creation and response rarely finds its way into educational documents; as a result, the professional mandate of English teachers seems to demand that they accept a simplistic version of truth-of-correspondence. The following directive from the 1977 English Guideline of the Ontario Ministry of

Education, for example, insists that teachers

> encourage the use of language and literature as a means by which the individual can explore personal and societal goals and acquire an understanding of the importance of such qualities as initiative, responsibility, respect, precision, self-discipline, judgement, and integrity in the pursuit of goals [emphasis mine].[5]

It is not surprising that the literature curriculum is generally seen in terms of its capacity for role-modeling such virtues; little wonder, then, that when a novel is met with allegations of profanity, blasphemy, and pornography, its apologist should attempt to meet the moral objections on their own terms. The Peterborough English Chair who wrote the most recent defense of Laurence's The Diviners deliberately downplayed literary values, and organized his rationale around the three areas of moral concern, "language, religion, and sex," that precipitated the outcry against its use in the schools (Buchanan 2).

Point, Checkpoint

The 1985 Peterborough defense of The Diviners (substantively unchanged from the 1976 version) is mainly a hard sell of the novel as a vehicle for the transmission of the Judaeo-Christian moral and religious tradition. In support of its religious merit, the defender casts The Diviners' protagonist, Morag Gunn, as a latter-day sojourner through Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained, and Christie Logan, the major male figure, as a contemporary version of John Bunyan's Muckraker. To counter the charges of "gutter" language and explicit sex, the rationale proceeds by way of an unabashedly moralistic interpretation of the novel's "message." The apologist directly parallels Morag's giving up swearing with her moral maturation, and contextualizes the sexual exploits of all the main characters in terms of retributive justice for contravening the Christian code of sexual ethics. On the view articulated here, The Diviners would seem to be an infallible self-help book for preservation of virtue in the young.

The problem is that it didn't wash, not only with the interpretative literalists, who could not or would not distinguish between strings of words

and the "order of words" (Frye 1957, 17) comprising literary context, but more importantly, with the interpretatively enlightened, who in this case played the truth-of-correspondence game with greater acumen than the apologist. By capitulating to the politics of referentiality, the defender of The Diviners was led straight into the censors' ballpark, with the result that the fundamentalists won the "moral," if not the actual, victory.

Despite its cloying rhetorical slickness, the brief from Renaissance Peterborough presents an argument at a more sophisticated level of truth-of-correspondence than that of interpretative literalism. Renaissance accepts the bid to read in literary context, but goes it one better by extrapolating from that context what it believes to be a more legitimate allegorical interpretation than that offered by the apologist. Standing the truth-of-correspondence model of teaching values in literature on its representational head, Renaissance Peterborough acknowledges that The Diviners may well reflect specific values, but they're not those claimed by the literary/educational establishment. As stated earlier, The Renaissance paper challenges the very literary terms of reference, such as realism, emotional engagement, and sympathetic identification (deemed self-justifications for teaching the novel) as potentially indoctrinative educational influences.

Renaissance cleverly stresses the sociological implications of reading in context, as well as the aesthetic and literary. Not coincidentally, it is precisely the sociology of literature that is invoked by other groups, such as feminists, multiculturalists, and nationalists, who are as equally concerned as religious fundamentalists about what kind of ideology infiltrates schools.[6] Whether through book banning or revising courses of study, both the political right and left attempt to control curriculum, and their positions on the relationship between the literature curriculum and social conditioning are remarkably similar. Both sides repudiate aesthetic integrity at the cost of injurious stereotyping in individual works; both sides want to redress the balance of what they consider to be a lopsided picture of the world in the curriculum as a whole. The Renaissance brief acknowledges that the "reality"

of Morag Gunn comprises "much more" than someone "in need of sexual gratification at whatever cost." Nevertheless, it raises the issue of the indoctrinative effect of students' repeated exposure to female protagonists who are unremittingly drawn with "a stunted idea of their own sexuality and of their identity." If realism "offers a way of seeing, understanding, and evaluating human experience vicariously perceived," Renaissance argues, then "it follows that much of the direction of such a learning process will hinge on the choice and treatment of reality."[7] On the premise that there does exist a direct relationship between literature and life, in which literary situations are "true" representations of "reality," Renaissance charges that a curriculum offering an overbalance of the realistic mode portraying the darker underside of life would seem to constitute its own form of censorship.

Solution, Resolutions

I see no convincing rebuttal to this line of argument without the aid of literary theory to help unpack the relationship between literature and life. Literature teachers might respond that realism is not a "slice of life," but a form of literary artifice with its own built-in literary conventions and intentions, that it constitutes as sure a separation from life as, say, fantasy or science fiction. However, within the present anti-criticism climate in the schools, realism is not taught as genre or as Belsey's verbal artifact closely approximating what the reader feels to be is "life." Too often literature serves simply as so much fodder for life skills within a pedagogy that fixates only on emotional engagement with the text as though literary characters and events are "real" people living in the "real" world, and not confections of words that are literally "made up." Afoot also is a naive psychologism that perpetuates the myth of the student as a "genuine primitive" (Frye 1976, 131) whose "free," "open," "spontaneous," precritical response is seen to be authentic and unprescribed because it is liberated from prepackaged teacher imposed interpretations and uncontaminated by the study of literary structure. One of the most problematic ramifications of truth-of-correspondence is the collapse of the distinction between literature and life.

When that distinction goes unheeded in the teaching of values and literature, we are dangerously close to believing that the literary text is a Rorschach test that will elicit all the "right" human values in its readers. Renaissance Peterborough, I believe, has successfully challenged that belief.

Lest I misrepresent my position completely, however, let me reiterate that my intention has not been to side with the censors in the Peterborough debate. Their assumptions about the reading process, the educational value and function of literature, and their relationship to education in general, I think, are wrong-headed. Yet so long as anti-censorship educators also think of literature and values as a truth-of-correspondence role model, they don't have it right either. This year one of my graduate students wrote a paper based upon a discussion of the censorship issue with her grade thirteen class, which was studying The Diviners. When asked about the function of literature as a blueprint for life, a senior student retorted, "I would no more go to a novel for advice on morality than I would say 'Thee' or 'Thou' after reading Shakespeare" (Bradshaw 7).

Rejection of the role-model theory of social conditioning does resolve the censorship dilemma by helping students to see the distinction between literature and life. But the kind of aesthetic distance presumed by such an awareness poses certain problems for justifying the moral and spiritual value of literature. How can teachers maintain, on the one hand, that critical detachment from the text ensures that students will not be co-opted by its moral dicta, and on the other, that the educational value of literature lies in its capacity to alter their lives for the better? In his book Literary Education: A Reevaluation the British philosopher of education James Gribble recognizes this double bind, and is willing to sacrifice engagement and its claims for moral improvement, to detachment and its claims for moral neutrality. Gribble is content to risk "some form of aestheticism rather than to allow that a great work of literature. . .could be viewed in such a way that it (or what it 'presents') could legitimately be rejected in the light of a moral code" (155).

I am not so content, and neither, I think, are literature teachers and researchers who believe in literature's potential for human development. To assert that language is not a transparent window through which we look at life or reality, that verbal constructs always mediate personal experience, is not necessarily to deny the undisputed emotional impact and imaginative appeal of literature. Plato did have one thing right when he banished the poets--poetry does influence. That inhabiting other lives and other worlds vicariously can contribute to psychic growth, that readers knit up what is otherwise unknown through a powerful naming, conjuring, fabricating of fictional persons, places and events, is an educational reality not to be negated by what I am saying here. But it must be recognized by both sides of the censorship debate that cognitive and emotional development is inherently subversive to unexamined belief, for psychic growth entails some loss of certitude in what is being grown out of. Once this process is underway, especially when it is fuelled by the literary imagination, there are no guarantees as to what may be brought to consciousness. Minds that become activated tend to activate themselves; once the lion has been awakened, there is no putting it back to sleep. This can be a real threat to parents and citizens who are deeply ambivalent about the power of independent thought to seduce youth away from traditional moral codes.

For teachers and educational leaders in the censorship issue, I think the key to the problem and perhaps to the solution is confronting the politics of belief in the engaged reader. The first step is ridding ourselves of the rhetorical analogue fallacy and the myth of the transparency of words by getting clear what we mean by a literary text. Rather than a closed mirror on reality that leads the passive reader down a predetermined garden path to a set of beliefs or actions, the literary text by <u>virtue of its literariness</u> is open to thousand-fold interpretations. These manifold interpretations both accommodate and transcend the imperative for sympathetic identification so essential to psychic and spiritual growth. Even as we claim that literature does not reflect reality so much as it invites us to make "What-if?"

hypotheses about it, we understand that its capacity for engaging the reader in transformation springs from the reader's apprehension of it as something true and real. To deny this is to deny the experience of anyone who has been literally entranced by reading a book. Psychological projection is inseparable from literary knowing, but so is the withdrawal of that projection. That is why students need both the experience of literature as life and the aesthetic awareness that distances literature from life. The enjoyable reading of literature and the study of its craft, historicity, and ideology does give with one hand and take away with the other. But it is just this capacity of literary language to work against itself that justifies its educational significance as perhaps the best pedagogical tool we have for both individual growth and social criticism.

Conclusion

Reconceptualizing literature as open text, as hypothetical statement rather than as moral model, does not itself do away with the problem of literature as indoctrination. Teachers may claim that reading and studying literature confers upon the student the power of moral choice by virtue of its capacity for widening perspectives, for increasing the range of possibilities that are disclosed by it; yet they cannot deny that certain kinds of literature stake out certain conceptual and emotional territories. We cannot live what we cannot imagine. That is why feminists seek to redress the scandalous underrepresentation of writing about and by women in the curriculum. It is not that they necessarily want to launch an affirmative action program in social conditioning; it is rather that they seek to bring to consciousness "possible forms of organization for experience" (Stierle 103) necessarily disallowed by patriarchy and the male authorial voice.

If it is admitted that certain texts tend to define certain kinds of possibilities for belief and action, then what must also be acknowledged is the fundamentalists' complaint that students are a captive audience in a prescribed literature curriculum, where the possibilities are defined and

delimited by a central authority. I believe that English teachers can profit from the censors' charge of book selection as book censorship by ackowledging that engagement with the text as an educational value brings with it a demand for a plurality of literary genres, themes, styles, and authors. Whether language theorists and literary critics have discredited truth-of-correspondence or not, most readers (and writers) assume its existence when they read for the pleasure of being manipulated by a fictional world; and to submit to the artistic manipulation of an author is to adopt, at least for purposes of the fiction, the moral dimension out of which it is wrought. So Moral Gunn's spiritual quest is true, moral, and religious inasmuch as the reader can identify with liberal, Christian, largely middle class values. Even though a reader may transform his/her own values in the reading process, the grounds of that transformation are at least in part set up by the text. And so, it would seem that the more varied the texts, the broader the base of identification, and the greater the likelihood that literary experience will eventuate in a balanced view of the world. Providing a plurality of literary texts, then, exonerates teachers from the dangers of subliminal ideological seduction without impeding literature's function in furthering individual growth.

The kind of educational transfer value from literature to life described above is, I think, a realistic expectation within truth-of-correspondence language theory. But truth-of-correspondence can speak only to the engagement side of the literary educational coin. In order to read literature as hypothesis, engagement and identification should be viewed as necessary first steps in the process of literary reading, the other side being detachment. Engagement presents an intuited sense of truth; detachment is movement to a highly conscious healthy caution about the truth claims of any literary work. For this we need Belsey's conception of literature as a "constructed artifact." When Morag Gunn's journey is seen as the product of the aesthetic sensibility of an author living in a specific time and place, the quality of her "truth" may seem more relative than absolute, but its

status as a genuine hypotheses, as a surmise, reflection, supposition about the world, is I think, more credible.

Defenses of literature in the curriculum sometimes tend to forget that literature is the raison d'etre of English as a language art, that is, as the apotheosis of non-literal, ambiguous meaning, as indirect communication. In the recent Peterborough censorship crisis, however, one of the novels, J. D. Salinger's Catcher in the Rye, was defended on just this basis of its linguistic indirection. By coming to grips with the language of Holden Caulfield, the apologia argues, students are taught a lesson in the value of literary criticism as a life skill:

> We can see . . . in our consideration of the book that language consists of far more than its literal meanings, that it is replete with social and other connotations which must be taken into account by those who would be truly proficient communicators. In this way, the book offers many excellent opportunities for investigating the extent to which meaning is determined as much by context and tone as by the content of what is communicated. Thus, students may come to understand that, in the final analysis, effective communication requires a considerable sensitivity of spirit and flexibility of mind. (McAuley 4)

The above claim is much less extravagant than that of the rhetorical analogue model, but it is, I believe, more realistic, and in the end, more honest. It may be objected that the position advanced in this paper merely weakens the case of English teachers by giving round to the opposition. I do not believe this to be the case. For one thing, censors will tend to see the appeal to literary context as an art pour l'art moral cop-out; and the educational values emanating from it, "sensitivity of mind and flexibility of spirit," as precisely those qualities that will take their children away from them. But the flip side of the censorship issue, the justification for the teaching of literature, is also at stake here. Currently, literature itself, both as an art and as a discipline, is under siege, not only from censors but from sociology, from post-structuralist criticism, from linguistics, from information theory, and from back-to-basics heresies about the redundancy of the literary in conceptions of literacy. All these phenomena, along with the ugliness of censorship battles, are forcing educators to re-examine the relationship between word and idea, image and action, literature and life. In

the process, I believe, we can avoid the negativitism of a "garrison mentality" and attain a healthy detachment about the educational value of literature. If so, English can only be the gainer. After all, we still do have "the best subject matter in the world" (Frye 1981, 5). Perhaps the censorship experience of a society with a somewhat ambiguous cultural identity can demonstrate the possibility of scrutinizing belief while fervently espousing it.

ENDNOTES

[1]I borrow these terms from, of course, Shakespeare, but more recently from my colleague, Steven Yeomans, with whom I co-authored a fuller discussion of the Peterborough crisis. See "School Censorship and Learning Values through Literature" in the Fall 1986 issue of The Journal of Moral Education.

[2]Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (New York: Methuen, 1980) 126. This distinction is, of course, not new; the two views of literature presented here may be seen as contemporary versions of Plato's and Aristotle's.

[3]Studies have shown that increased familiarity with material judged obscene leads to more positive judgments about the material, but that those demanding censorship are reluctant are to be exposed to further knowledge of the offending material. Thus a vicious circle is created "between the poles of refusal to be exposed and familiarity--those who associate obscenity with negative emotional response do not become familiar with obscenity and thereby continue to believe that it has a negative emotional effect." Richard Beach, "Issues of Censorship and Research on Effects of and Response to Reading," Dealing with Censorship, ed. James E. Davis (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1979) 142.

[4]"I had to wrestle with this one. English is really not my field and there were some things I missed initially. I had to probe to see the significance of the book. I required a tremendous amount of basic guidance." Quoted from The Peterborough Examiner, April 22, 1976.

[5]Curriculum Guideline for the Senior Division, English, 1977, Ontario Ministry of Education. It should be noted that in the draft of the revised guidelines to be published later this year, the relationship between values and literature has not been rethought except to assert the place of literature study in personal growth. In other areas, however, such as language and learning, individualization, and evaluation, the document is remarkably progressive.

[6]See Priscilla Galloway, What's Wrong with High School English? . . . It's Sexist, Un-Canadian, Outdated (Toronto: OISE Press, 1980) for a call for revision of curriculum with respect to contemporaneity, sex-role stereotyping, and Canadian content. For feminist critical concerns about the relationship between the ethical and the aesthetic, see especially Annette Kolodny, "Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism," in The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) 150. For the relationship of realism to ideology see Rosalind Coward, "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?" in Showalter 227-230; and Catherine Belsey 46-51, 126-127. It should be stressed that a major difference between fundamentalism and feminism with respect to literature and values is that, while fundamentalists appear to want to "guarantee" meaning, the most enlightened feminist critics, such as those quoted here, advocate polysemous meaning, or the possibility of a plurality of meaning.

[7]Renaissance Peterborough, Unpublished Position Paper on "Aspects of the Teaching of English Literature," presented to The Peterborough County Board of Education, February 1977, 2-3.

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